**UNITED NATIONS** **E**

# Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/1997/73
10 June 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Substantive session of 1997
Geneva, 30 June-25 July 1997
Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

## INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE MAJOR UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS


| | | Paragraphs | Page |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. | INTRODUCTION | 1 - 6 | 2 |
| II. | ACTION AT THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL LEVEL | 7 - 18 | 2 |
| III. | PROGRESS AT THE INTER-AGENCY LEVEL | 19 - 58 | 10 |
| | A. Action taken by the Administrative Committee on Coordination | 19 - 24 | 10 |
| | B. Work of the standing consultative committees and ad hoc task forces of the Administrative Committee on Coordination | 25 - 56 | 11 |
| | C. World Food Summit | 57 | 19 |
| | D. United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) | 58 | 19 |
| IV. | PROGRESS AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL | 59 - 66 | 19 |
| | A. Background | 59 - 60 | 19 |
| | B. Overview | 61 - 65 | 20 |
| | C. Complementarity with other inter-agency initiatives | 66 | 22 |
| V. | CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 67 - 71 | 23 |


* E/1997/100.

97-15740 (E) 020797

/...

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The global conferences organized by the United Nations during the 1990s have helped devise internationally agreed policies and programmes relating to the environment and development, social development, population and development, women, children, human rights, small island developing States, human settlements, and food security. The outcomes of these conferences constitute a comprehensive development agenda with many common themes.

2. While there is at present a hiatus in conferences, the task of integrating the internationally agreed programmes into national policies and actions has yet to be fully accomplished. The United Nations system is a key instrument in the hands of Governments for meeting this challenge. However, the system can assist Governments in this task only if it can mobilize a coherent response to the vast and overlapping elements of the development agenda that has emerged from global conferences.

3. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), at its first regular session in 1995, recognized the need for a common framework in order to assist countries in the coordinated implementation and monitoring of the programmes of action adopted by global conferences. ACC agreed that such a common framework should promote a coordinated response by the United Nations system to cross-cutting themes and should help reduce the burden of reporting on countries and on United Nations system organizations with regard to implementation.

4. The Economic and Social Council adopted a set of far-reaching agreed conclusions at its coordination segment in 1995 (Agreed Conclusions 1995/1), by which it launched a coordinated approach to the conference follow-up by the United Nations system and made that goal a major thrust of its work.

5. The present report is submitted in response to Council resolution 1996/36 and General Assembly resolutions 51/171 and 51/177. In its resolution, the Council, inter alia, invited ACC to present the reports on the work of its task forces on an enabling environment for economic and social development, basic social services for all, and employment and sustainable livelihoods, as well as the inter-agency committees on sustainable development and women and gender equality to the substantive session of 1997 of the Council.

6. The report presents to the Council an overview of the work of the inter-agency task forces and the two inter-agency committees, as well as the arrangements for a coordinated follow-up to the World Food Summit and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) within the broader context of coordinated follow-up to conferences at the intergovernmental, inter-agency and field levels.

## II. ACTION AT THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL LEVEL

7. In his report on the coordinated follow-up to conferences submitted to the Council in 1995 (E/1995/86), the Secretary-General identified the cross-cutting themes of recent global conferences, and made proposals for a coordinated

approach for sharing of responsibilities between the Assembly, the Council and the functional commissions with primary responsibility, at the functional level, for implementation of the conferences' outcome. Agreed Conclusions 1995/1 adopted by the Council at its 1995 coordination segment addressed, among other things, the complementarity and coherence of the work of these bodies. In its latest resolution on restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields (Assembly resolution 50/227), the Assembly, inter alia, built upon the Council's 1995 recommendations and gave detailed guidance on its work and that of the Council and its subsidiary machinery in ensuring a coordinated follow-up to conferences (see A/52/155-E/1997/68). Since then, follow-up to conferences has taken place within the context of this three-tiered structure.

8. The Assembly has also addressed policy and institutional issues related to the follow-up to and implementation of recent major conferences in the economic, social and related areas. In this respect, two trends might be pointed out. First, the Assembly has underscored the need for the commitments and conference outcomes to be monitored in an integrated manner. For instance, in addition to its resolution 51/177 on the implementation of the outcome of Habitat II and its resolution 51/171 on the World Food Summit, the Assembly, in its resolution 51/173, called for the review and appraisal of the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development in Developing Countries, and of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade to be coordinated with the follow-up work on major United Nations conferences. At its fifty-first session, the Assembly also decided to pursue an integrated approach by devoting plenary meetings to reviews of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit for Children and the World Summit for Social Development and by increasing the coherence of the work of the Second and Third Committees.

9. However, thus far, the structure of the Assembly's agenda and the separate streams of work in the Second and Third Committees have not made it possible to consider conference follow-up issues as "interlinked and contributing to an integrated framework", as called for in paragraph 2 of the Council's Agreed Conclusions 1995/1; rather, more often than not, these have been treated more or less independently from one another. Also, integrated reporting is still rare.

10. It must be underscored, however, that a large part of the Assembly's work in the economic, social and related areas does in fact address cross-cutting themes of international conferences - such as external debt and finance for development, trade and development, poverty eradication, science and technology, advancement of women, human rights, and problems of countries in special situations. However, reporting on these themes is not systematically placed in the context of conference provisions, nor is the guidance thereon translated systematically by the rest of the United Nations system as guidance and evaluation for conference follow-up as such.

11. Ways thus need to be found to maximize synergies between the follow-up to individual conferences at the level of the Assembly. For instance, the examination at mid-decade of the goals of the World Summit for Children should feed into the monitoring of the implementation of other conference outcomes, many of which endorsed the same goals. The five-year review of the Vienna Plan

of Action on human rights could also take into account the work in other follow-up processes such as those in regard to women and children.

12. As for the Council itself, since 1995, it has devoted considerable attention to promoting coordinated and integrated follow-up to conferences. Pursuant to this approach, at its coordination segment, in 1996, the Council examined poverty eradication as a cross-cutting theme and provided extensive guidance to the United Nations system for improving coordination of poverty eradication activities at the field and headquarters levels. At its current session, the Council will undertake a similar examination of the topic of mainstreaming the gender perspective in all policies and programmes of the United Nations system. The topic of its high-level segment - "Fostering an enabling environment for development, financial flows, including capital flows, investment, trade" - is also a cross-cutting theme emanating from a number of major conferences (see E/1997/67). As a sign of the importance it attaches to the goal of coordinated follow-up, the Council decided to place a separate item on its agenda entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of the major international United Nations conferences and summits".

13. The Council also decided to enhance complementarity and coordination among its functional commissions, and between their work and that of the Council. In 1996, it made detailed recommendations for harmonizing the work programmes of functional commissions on various aspects of poverty eradication (see A/51/3 (Part I), chap. III). A report on the follow-up to its agreed conclusions of that year (E/1997/58) is presented to the Council.

14. Box 1 summarizes the main outcome of the work of the functional commissions in 1997 for follow-up to conferences. In accordance with directives of the Council, the functional commissions have increasingly placed their work within the context of coordinated follow-up to major conferences. On specific themes, they have focused increasingly on their area of responsibilities and have taken account of provisions of other conferences and of the work in other bodies thereon. There has been growing interaction among the commissions; they have exchanged inputs, and more such exchanges are planned for the coming years. There was also a dialogue with the Council, in particular on the follow-up to the Council's agreed conclusions of 1996. Also, the Commission for Social Development transmitted its agreed conclusions on employment and sustainable livelihoods (see E/1997/26, chap. I, resolution 35/2) as an input to the Council's 1997 high-level segment. In addition, efforts were made for more integrated reporting to the commissions, which was facilitated by the use of task managers. However, there were relatively few instances of consultations between the Bureaux of the functional commissions, and between them and the Bureau of the Council. A good example of an integrated approach to conferences is the work of the Statistical Commission, which examined the statistical implications of the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, and endorsed a Minimum National Social Data Set as a contribution to establishing a common national and international indicators database.

Box 1. Main outcomes of functional commissions in 1997 related to conference follow-up

Commission on Population and Development: draft resolution for the consideration of the Council on international migration and development (see E/1997/31).

Commission for Social Development: agreed conclusion on priority theme: "Productive employment and sustainable livelihoods" (E/1997/27, resolution 35/2); transmitted to the Council for input into its 1997 high-level segment.

Commission on Human Rights: resolution 1997/69 on comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action; resolution 1997/8 on the right to food; measures on human rights and the environment (see E/1997/23).

Statistical Commission: in following up the statistical implications of recent major international conferences, the Statistical Commission adopted a Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS) (15 indicators) (see E/1997/24).

Furthermore, the Expert Group on the statistical implications of recent major United Nations conferences presented recommendations on a work programme in statistics and indicators for integrated follow-up to recent United Nations conferences in the social field.

Commission on the Status of Women: agreed conclusions on (1) women and the environment, (2) women in power and decision-making, (3) women and the economy, (4) education and training of women. With draft resolution XX recommended for its adoption, the Council would, inter alia, endorse these agreed conclusions (see E/1997/27).

Commission on Sustainable Development: the Commission acted as the preparatory body for the 1997 special session of the Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, and also recommended modalities for the 1997 review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

Commission on Human Settlements (standing committee of the Council): resolutions on revitalization of the Habitat Centre, review of the working methods of the Commission: the involvement of partners, and future role of the Commission.

15. There is however, scope for further promoting a coordinated approach among the functional commissions. In particular, there continues to be significant overlap and duplication in some aspects of the work of the commissions, although each commission may be focusing on a somewhat different dimension of the issue. For instance, the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission for Sustainable Development each addressed some dimensions of the international enabling environment for development. There is still room for the commissions to make more use of the work of other

functional commissions - or of the Council and the Assembly - in dealing with cross-cutting issues. This will be particularly important for example if, in 2000, the Commission on Sustainable Development addresses the theme of "financial resources, trade, investment, and economic growth", as proposed in its draft programme of work (see E/1997/25, chap. I, sect. C), as well as for the work of the Commission on Human Rights on the human rights effects of structural adjustment programmes and debt. The following table summarizes multi-year work programmes of the functional commissions between 1997 and 2002 for follow-up to the conference within their purview.

Table. Programmes of work of the Council's functional commissions

| | Multi-year work programme | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Selected major event or events of the year | | - Overall review of WCHR<br>- Special session of the Assembly on narcotic drugs | - Overall review of ICPD<br>- International Year of Older Persons | - Overall review of WSSD and FWCW | - Review of WSC<br>- Review of Habitat II | - Review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa |
| Commission on Population and Development | yes, 1996-1999 | Health and mortality (emphasis on health-development linkages, on gender, on age) | Population growth, structure, distribution (emphasis: sustained economic growth and sustainable development, including education)<br>- Quinquennial review and appraisal of ICPD | | | |
| Commission on Sustainable Development | yes, 1997-2000<br>Yearly:<br>- Enabling environment<br>- Social development goals in structural adjustment programmes<br>- Resources<br>- Framework for cooperation in social development | Promoting social integration and participation of all, including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and persons | - Social services for all<br>- Initiation of the overall review of WSSD | Contribution of the Commission to the overall review and appraisal of the Summit | | |
| Commission on the Status of Women | yes, 1997-2000 | - Violence against women<br>- Women and armed conflicts<br>- Human rights of women<br>- The girl child | - Women and health<br>- Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women<br>- Initiation of comprehensive review and appraisal of FWCW | - Comprehensive review of FWCW<br>- Emerging issues | | |

| | Multi-year work programme | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Commission on Sustainable Development (subject to approval of the Assembly at its nineteenth special session) | yes, 1994-1997, and draft for 1998-2002; overriding issues: poverty, consumption and production patterns | Sectoral: integrated fresh water management<br>Cross-sectoral: transfer of technology, capacity-building, education, science, awareness-building<br>Economic sector/ major group: industry | Comprehensive review of the Programme of Action for SIDS<br>Sectoral: oceans and seas<br>Cross-sectoral: consumption and production patterns<br>Economic sector: tourism | Sectoral: integrated planning and management of land resources<br>Cross-sectoral: financial resources; trade and investment; economic growth<br>Economic sector/ major group: agriculture | Sectoral: atmosphere, energy<br>Cross-sectoral: information for decision-making and participation; international cooperation for an enabling environment<br>Economic sector/ major group: energy transport | Comprehensive review |

Key:

ICPD - International Conference on Population and Development
WSSD - World Summit for Social Development
SIDS - small island developing States
FWCW - Fourth World Conference on Women
WSC - World Summit for Children
WCHR - World Conference on Human Rights

16. The work of a few commissions this year also illustrates the difficulty of grappling with the follow-up and monitoring of the wide range of measures agreed upon at conferences, especially within the available format, time and resources. For a productive and detailed examination of provisions in a given area, intergovernmental work has to benefit from inputs from the country level, the United Nations system, Governments, and actors of civil society, as well as experts and practitioners in the area concerned. Without such complete input, the substantive and technical basis for debate in the commissions is restrained, leading them to repeating outcomes of conferences. The organization of panels during sessions of commissions has shown positive results, but there is scope for further progress.

17. One positive aspect is that the work of the commissions give impetus for further technical work by other forums and bodies, within or outside the United Nations system, or ad hoc meetings. An example of this is resolution 1997/1 of the Commission on Population and Development (see E/1997/25), which, although it does not address substantive aspects of migration and development in detail, does call for further in-depth work, in particular by the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All. The resolution of the Commission on Human Rights on follow-up to the Vienna outcomes is of a similar nature, calling for action by the United Nations system and by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in particular. In paragraph 20 of its Agreed Conclusions 1997/2, the Commission on the Status of Women invited international and multilateral agencies to consider ways to communicate and exchange information, inter alia, through workshops and seminars on lessons learned for mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes.

18. Effective and coordinated follow-up also requires that intergovernmental bodies draw upon the work of the United Nations coordination mechanisms, as recognized by the Council in 1995. Indeed, the ACC machinery for follow-up to conferences has reported to and interacted closely with the relevant commissions in facilitating their work. The close substantive support provided to the Commission on Sustainable Development by the Inter-Agency Committee for Sustainable Development (IACSD) provides a good precedent in this regard. The Task Force on Basic Social Services for All submitted a report on international migration to the Commission on Population and Development (see E/CN.9/1997/4). The Commission for Social Development held a dialogue with the chairpersons of the inter-agency task forces in both 1996 and 1997, and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality presented an oral report on its work to the Commission on the Status of Women (see also E/CN.6/1997/2). These interactions provided opportunities for the intergovernmental machinery to make inputs on several substantive issues for inter-agency coordination at the field level. The Commission on Population and Development, for example, provided precise guidance to the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All.

## III. PROGRESS AT THE INTER-AGENCY LEVEL

### A. Action taken by the Administrative Committee on Coordination

19. During the past few years, ACC, in addressing the main policy issues facing the international community, has endeavoured to promote and organize joint initiatives towards common objectives. ACC has also sought to develop common policy frameworks in key priority areas to guide the work of the United Nations system and to strengthen the Committee's support to the central intergovernmental bodies in the exercise of their system-wide responsibilities. ACC's work in promoting an integrated follow-up to recent global conferences forms part of this overall effort.

20. All concerned inter-agency bodies under ACC have contributed actively to the coordinated follow-up to the recent United Nations conferences. The Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) has paid particular attention to this matter. Its work programme has also included issues that are directly relevant to the conference follow-up such as the coordination of activities relating to poverty alleviation. The Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, while continuing to serve as the main institutional framework for promoting a coherent system-wide response to Agenda 21, has also taken into account the need for a coordinated approach.

21. The three ad hoc inter-agency task forces established by ACC in 1995 - the Inter-Agency Task Force on Basic Social Services for All, chaired by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Inter-Agency Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods, chaired by the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development, chaired by the World Bank - were given the task of providing to United Nations resident coordinators and country-level teams coherent system-wide guidance and support in their efforts to assist individual countries to translate the outcome of conferences into concrete national policies and programmes. ACC also decided that cross-cutting policy objectives such as the advancement of women and the promotion of human rights as well as other cross-cutting issues, for example access to communication, should be pursued by each Task Force in the context of the theme or themes assigned to it. In addition, close interlinkages were to be established with the Steering Committee on the United Nations system-wide Special Initiative on Africa.

22. At the same time, recognizing that the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women went well beyond the themes of the above-mentioned Task Forces, ACC established in 1996 the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality with the responsibility of addressing on a comprehensive system-wide basis all aspects of the implementation of the Platform for Action, as well as gender-related recommendations emanating from other recent international conferences.

23. Concerning human rights, ACC decided at its first regular session for 1994 to review periodically the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Accordingly, ACC has decided to include in the agenda of its second regular session for 1997 an item on the preparations for the five-year review of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of

Action and for the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. In this context, ACC authorized the convening of inter-agency consultations during 1997 to prepare, for its consideration, the assessment of the system's response to the Vienna Programme of Action.

24. Although it may be too early to make an overall assessment, thus far the inter-agency framework established by ACC has worked well. In carrying out their work programmes, the committees of the regular ACC machinery have been pursuing a coordinated approach. The main thrust of the operation of the three task forces has been to develop country-based end products designed to assist countries in the implementation of the programmes of action of recent United Nations conferences. Although the Task Forces have not yet completed their work (the Task Force on Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development is expected to complete its work in July), there are already indications that the work of the other two task forces has led to important policy development to guide country-level actions. An overview of the work of the relevant ACC inter-agency committees and ad hoc task forces that follows indicates the progress achieved thus far.

## B. Work of the standing consultative committees and the ad hoc task forces of the Administrative Committee on Coordination

### 1. Consultative committees

#### (a) Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development

25. Following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, ACC developed a framework for promoting a coherent system-wide response to Conference follow-up requirements. It was built on an innovative model that combined central coordination functions, vested in ACC and the newly established Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, and decentralized allocation of specific responsibilities to relevant organizations of the United Nations system, based on their comparative strengths, to act as task managers for various programme components of Agenda 21.

26. The task manager system of the Inter-Agency Committee has led to enhanced effectiveness in the use of resources and expertise within the United Nations system. It has rationalized the preparation of reports for the Commission on Sustainable Development and facilitated contributions from organizations based on their specialized mandates. By encouraging systematic communication and information exchange, it has helped disseminate knowledge of means to promote sustainable development and has reduced duplication of effort. It has also helped to promote greater interaction with other inter-agency arrangements. The task manager system has also furthered outreach beyond the framework of the United Nations system by involving other relevant intergovernmental organizations and processes, as well as partners from major groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Inter-Agency Committee has served as an umbrella for other coordination initiatives, including more specialized inter-agency mechanisms, which have worked best when taking a focused, thematic approach.

27. System-wide work aimed at further broadening and deepening existing inter-agency collaboration and coordination in follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development includes continuing consideration of measures aimed at improving the delivery capacity and coordination at the field level, enhancing policy coordination at the global, regional and country levels, better interaction between the Inter-Agency Committee and other bodies and mechanisms of ACC for inter-agency coordination, streamlining requests for reporting, and involvement of organizations outside the United Nations system, among others. In the view of ACC, these evolving arrangements have generally allowed the United Nations system to provide a flexible, collaborative and participatory mechanism to support the implementation of Agenda 21 and the coordination of various sustainable development activities. Successful examples of such system collaboration include the interorganizational programme on the sound management of chemical safety and the informal inter-agency task force on forests.

28. Despite this progress in fostering coordination among agencies, a better balance is still needed in coordination at the global, regional and country/field levels. In particular, cooperation remains underdeveloped in some regions, although in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), agencies have been designated as coordinators for specific programme areas of the regional action programme. The promotion of joint programming at the regional and subregional levels, leading to a more integrated approach that incorporates the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development, also needs to be encouraged.

(b) Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality

29. The establishment by the ACC in April 1996 of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality regularized an ad hoc arrangement on inter-agency work on women's and gender issues that had been in place since the first World Conference on Women (Mexico City, 1975). This decision by ACC also reaffirmed the fact that the mandates resulting from the Fourth World Conference on Women would receive ongoing and sustained attention of the United Nations system.

30. The terms of reference of the new Inter-Agency Committee called for two major areas of focus: firstly, effective coordination and cooperation of the United Nations system in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and gender-related recommendations emanating from other United Nations conferences; and secondly, effective cooperation and coordination in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective in the work of the United Nations system. The Committee's efforts in this regard will focus on providing advice and guidance to the organizations of the United Nations system, through ACC, and the other relevant parts of its subsidiary machinery on how to translate the mainstreaming mandate into practical reality and on other areas for coordination.

31. The Inter-Agency Committee has held two sessions to date. It is envisaged that the Committee will hold annual sessions in conjunction with the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. The Committee is expected to address at each session a few substantive topics that will be chosen either in accordance with the work programmes of intergovernmental bodies of member organizations,

with a view to providing input from the inter-agency perspective, or for their relevance in terms of activities undertaken elsewhere in the inter-agency framework. The Committee also plans to examine performance indicators, to compile best practices and lessons learned, and to identify accountability mechanisms and obstacles to progress in achieving equality for women.

32. In order to ensure that follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and mainstreaming of a gender perspective are an integral part of all United Nations system conference follow-up activities, the Committee has interacted with the ACC ad hoc task forces on conference follow-up and other ACC bodies, through its designated focal point for this purpose, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and UNFPA in the specific case of the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All. The Committee has offered its support and assistance in that regard and has called upon ACC to underline the importance of integrating a gender perspective in the work of the task forces and in subsequent activities on integrated follow-up to conferences. It has identified complementarities between the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action with sections of the programmes, plans and platforms adopted at other recent global conferences, and has provided an indicative list of measures that the task forces could take in their work.

33. The Committee also addressed gender-specific issues with regard to women arising in conflicts, in emergency situations and in peacekeeping operations with a view to providing inputs into the preparation of themes on the agenda of the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session, to be held in 1998. The Committee examined a draft of the report to be submitted to the Council at its 1997 coordination segment on gender mainstreaming with inputs, inter alia, from the Gender in Development Sub-Group of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy.

34. With regard to the issue of quantitative and qualitative indicators used to measure progress in the implementation of Beijing Conference results, the Inter-Agency Committee will assess the efforts of other inter-agency mechanisms, examining this issue with regard to gender dimensions and gender programming, and will prepare recommendations for harmonization and elimination of duplication. Likewise, the Committee will elaborate guidelines for budgeting processes to facilitate assessment and monitoring of resources benefiting women and men as a result of mainstreaming and to assess whether resources are allocated in a way designed to accelerate the achievement of the goal of gender equality.

35. In 1998, the Committee will review substantive and coordination issues in the area of women and health in preparation of the consideration of this area of concern by the Commission on the Status of Women in 1999. Likewise, the Committee will assess the degree to which implementation of women-specific activities and of mainstreaming, as reflected in the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women 1996-2001, is progressing throughout the United Nations system, with a particular emphasis to be placed on operational activities at the country level.

36. The Committee will also seek the support of other organizations outside the United Nations system in coordinating the implementation of the Beijing Platform

for Action. In this regard, it will convene a workshop jointly with the Women in Development Group of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development later this year to share experiences and to develop common strategies in support of implementation of the Platform for Action and mainstreaming of a gender perspective at the national level in multilateral and bilateral development cooperation.

## 2. Ad hoc inter-agency task forces

### (a) Inter-Agency Task Force on Basic Social Services for All

37. UNFPA convened in New York in February 1996 the organizational meeting of the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All. At this meeting, with representation from 18 organizations of the United Nations system, the Task Force agreed on its terms of reference and work plan. It established two new working groups - on Primary Health Care with WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as joint lead agencies, and on Basic Education with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as the lead agency. It decided to maintain three working groups from the earlier inter-agency task force for follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, namely those on Reproductive Health with the World Health Organization (WHO) as the lead agency, on International Migration with ILO as the lead agency, and on a Common Approach to National Capacity-Building in Tracking Child and Maternal Mortality with UNICEF as the lead agency. The Task Force also agreed to take into account in its work programme the following cross-cutting dimensions: selection/use of indicators; gender perspective; resource mobilization; policy; targeting of specific groups, including those in post-crisis situations; and involvement of civil society.

38. Two subsequent meetings of the Task Force were held to consider progress and to finalize its work. At the suggestion of several resident coordinators and recognizing the perceived need at the country level, the Task Force considered that it was essential to identify appropriate indicators for measuring progress in reaching conference goals as well as for monitoring programme effectiveness in relevant sectors. It stressed the need for a common data system to be used consistently by all United Nations organizations. It was also stressed that the "guidelines" should be focused and concise and that attention should be paid to modalities for building country capacity in the basic social services. The Task Force also sought to formulate its outputs in such a way that these could be readily used in preparing country strategy notes and common country assessments.

39. The Task Force produced five end products: (a) guidelines on sectoral issues for the United Nations resident coordinator system; (b) a wall-chart with indicators for social services, delineating where countries are currently and where they need to be in terms of the goals agreed to at the recent United Nations global conferences; (c) a report on best practices/lessons learned in donor collaboration in assistance to the social sector focusing on three country case studies in Bangladesh, Kenya and Peru; (d) a pocket-card on advocacy for basic social services; and (e) a compendium of conventions and treaties pertaining to the social sector. It is envisaged that the data of the wall-

chart will be updated periodically to enable countries to monitor their progress towards the achievement of conference goals. All products of the Task Force are being disseminated widely and will be made available electronically via the Internet and where feasible on CD-ROM.

40. The Task Force agreed that the use of its end products would be promoted in the day-to-day work of the United Nations resident coordinators and field staff. Training in the use of the guidelines would also be undertaken, and the Turin Centre would be requested to develop a training module for resident coordinators. Other members of the Task Force have been encouraged to include training on the guidelines in their regular training programmes.

41. The Task Force has emphasized the importance of obtaining feedback from the field on the usage and usefulness of these products. It recommended that priority should be given to establishing development partnerships at the country level with non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society. In order to rationalize reporting requirements the Task Force suggested that consideration should be given to the preparation of one report per key area by the lead agency in that area. This approach could also significantly reduce the reporting burden on countries.

42. One of the most important achievements of the Task Force has been in mobilizing inter-agency collaboration for producing guidelines in specific areas related to the basic social services. In particular, efforts have been made to ensure that those guidelines are user-friendly, short, clear and concise so that they may be easily and readily used by the United Nations resident coordinators and field staff in their day-to-day work. Another notable success of the work of the Task Force is the inter-agency consensus achieved through its work on the importance of having a set of common indicators, data-sharing and the joint collection of data.

(b) Inter-Agency Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods

43. The first organizational meeting of the Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods, which ILO convened in Geneva in January 1996, agreed on its terms of reference and a work plan that would focus on a set of country reviews. It agreed to address the following three specific topics from a global perspective: (a) the impact of technology on employment; (b) the evolving concept of sustainable livelihoods; and (c) the need for improved indicators of employment and sustainable livelihoods. Three further meetings were held in 1996 and one in 1997. Country-level reviews and seminars were completed in six countries - Chile, Hungary, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal and Zambia.

44. As planned, the Task Force produced a synthesis report for use by the resident coordinator system, summarizing lessons of experience at the country level and across countries with a view to suggesting ways of improving inter-agency collaboration in the future and providing a clear understanding of the different ingredients that work for the promotion of employment and sustainable livelihoods in specific situations and of the necessary indicators for monitoring progress in these areas. The synthesis report was based on a number of country reviews that addressed factors related to employment and

sustainable livelihoods and addressed as well other resources of the agencies involved.

45. The country reviews built on existing work previously undertaken by the organizations of the United Nations system and by the national authorities and local research institutions. They provided a comprehensive diagnosis of the country situation and a suggested plan of action to address the problems and constraints that the country faced. They also provided practical guidance for policy reform, proposals for technical assistance and guidance to the resident coordinator system.

46. In each case, following the preparation of the report, an inter-agency meeting at the national level was held to discuss the findings and proposals of the report. This was followed by a one-day national workshop that disseminated the results of the exercise, sought to achieve some consensus on the recommendations derived from the review, and charted areas of future support of the United Nations system. The workshops brought together government policy makers, representatives of United Nations agencies and civil society, representatives of workers and employers, members of national research institutions, and representatives of the media and the donor community. In its synthesis report, the Task Force proposed that an interregional seminar should be convened where representatives of the countries reviewed could discuss the report of the Task Force.

47. The main finding from the analysis of the issues in the countries reviewed was that significant reductions in unemployment and poverty would foremost require a strong and effective commitment of the Government. A strategy for employment and sustainable livelihoods must be formulated with the widest possible consensus of the representatives of civil society, and workers' and employers' organizations. Achieving continued economic growth of the type that made good use of the assets that the poor own, i.e. labour, investing in human capital, removing distortions that discriminate against the poor and the unemployed, and targeting interventions towards the vulnerable and the extremely poor were found to be the proven ways of promoting employment and sustainable livelihoods. The analysis also found that market reforms, while essential for achieving sustainable employment growth and poverty alleviation, were not enough. They needed to be supplemented by policies and programmes designed to strengthen the capacity of key groups, including the poor, to respond adequately to new opportunities.

48. The country reviews confirmed the positive relationship expected between growth of output and expansion of employment. They also showed that the quality of employment was often unsatisfactory where low levels of social protection and limited respect for workers' rights persisted. Women continued to face discrimination in terms of employment and wages, as well as in education; minority groups also often faced discrimination; and child labour was a widespread problem. Overcoming unemployment, underemployment and poverty required sustained labour-intensive growth. In turn this requires macroeconomic stability, sectoral policies that have relatively higher potential for job creation, building up labour market institutions, and good quality training, as well as targeted programmes to address the problems of special groups. In

addition, the review determined that comprehensive efforts were needed to combat gender discrimination and child labour.

49. According to the review, action would also need to be undertaken in a number of key areas at the national and international levels. At the national level, such actions would include devising a sound macroeconomic policy framework, promoting jobs through employment-intensive sectoral policies, enterprise creation, and targeted employment programmes for the most vulnerable groups. This would further involve, for instance, a review of policies that have a major influence on achieving sustainable livelihoods in rural areas and undertaking a review of agricultural policies, as well as promoting the urban informal sector and upgrading its conditions of work and productivity. The technical competence of the labour force must be improved and managerial capacity further developed. Targeted programmes would need to be evaluated and the most successful expanded. At the international level, it was judged important that the world trading system remain as open as possible and that progress towards debt reduction in countries where macroeconomic policies are in line with economic fundamentals be given further impetus. Under current trends in global interdependence, international governance would require reaching a global compact on means to enhance job creation at the national level through orderly management of financial and trade flows and through promotion of democratic systems and respect for fundamental labour standards.

50. Apart from its concentration on country-level action for conference follow-up, the Task Force highlighted issues of global concern that remain challenges for the United Nations system, including a fuller appreciation of the significance of globalization and technological change for employment, the role of full employment as the means to promote sustainable livelihoods, and the need for indicators that can more adequately reflect the notions of employment, underemployment and sustainable livelihoods.

(c) Inter-Agency Task Force on the Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development

51. The World Bank convened the first organizational meeting of the Task Force in Washington, D.C., with wide representation from United Nations organizations. The Task Force decided to prepare a synthesis of best practices or lessons learned with the aim of clarifying the elements of an enabling environment for economic and social development and of establishing mechanisms for improving inter-agency coordination in support of such an environment. The Task Force established two sub-groups to address the major issues within its purview. The first, on Capacity Development for Governance, was chaired by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the second, on Macroeconomic and Social Framework, was chaired by the World Bank itself.

52. The primary responsibilities of the sub-group on Macroeconomic and Social Framework were to clarify the key elements of the macroeconomic and social framework, to develop country case studies of inter-agency coordination in support of such a framework, and to derive lessons learned and guidance for future inter-agency coordination based on these country experiences. The objective of the case studies was to examine the role of the United Nations system agencies in assisting countries to create an appropriate macroeconomic

and social framework, which would entail exploring instances where the successful development of an enabling environment had been enhanced through United Nations system agency support and inter-agency coordination, or where the lack of such coordination proved to be detrimental.

53. The countries selected for the case studies were chosen from those actively pursuing a reform agenda during the period under study, countries with active United Nations system involvement, and those whose national development situation would enable multiple perspectives to be addressed. The country case studies were completed in April of this year, and the final report on the work of the sub-group is expected to be completed by the end of June.

54. The sub-group on Capacity Development for Governance agreed to prepare a consolidated report, based on studies to be undertaken by its members, concerning their best practices in supporting capacity development in the area of governance. The case studies were to be based on the comparative advantage and mandate of each agency. It was also agreed that the framework for governance contained in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development would serve as the definition and overall guidance for the members of the sub-group. The sub-group further emphasized that the purpose of undertaking these studies was to draw upon each agency's experience and lessons learned as a resource for identifying and establishing more effective inter-agency partnerships in support of national programmes for sustainable capacity development and sound governance. In reviewing each agency's approach to supporting capacity development in the area of governance and their experiences, agencies agreed that special attention would be given to two cross-cutting issues, namely, (a) ensuring the sustainability of capacity-development aspects of governance and (b) the role of agencies in programme design and implementation, in order to be able to compare common issues and conclusions. A plenary meeting of the sub-group was convened in March 1997 to finalize the consolidated report. It is envisaged that the Task Force will complete its work in the early part of the summer.

### 3. Follow-up to the inter-agency task forces

55. At its first regular session for 1997, ACC decided to undertake a comprehensive assessment of overall progress in promoting the coordinated follow-up to conferences. As part of this review, ACC agreed to assess: (a) the effective utilization of the end products, including indicators, of the task forces; (b) the regular updating and feedback on follow-up activities at the country level and on attainment of goals established by the conferences; (c) the streamlining of reporting requirements and mechanisms, building on existing reporting and information arrangements, and on common country assessments and on the concept of task managers and lead organizations; and (d) experience gained and lessons learned from the use of flexible mechanisms such as the task forces for carrying out specific tasks under ACC.

56. In this context, ACC decided to hold a workshop in early September 1997, the main purposes of which are (a) to review the outputs of the Inter-Agency Task Forces and other bodies to ensure coherence and interlinkages among them,

particularly regarding guidance for the resident coordinator system, (b) to develop proposals for submission through CCPOQ to ACC at its second regular session for 1997 on the continued coordination and sustainability of the follow-up to the international conferences, and (c) to address the need for further simplification and streamlining of meeting and reporting requirements. The participation of the workshop should include the chairpersons of the inter-agency task forces and of the relevant ACC subsidiary mechanisms (Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, CCPOQ, Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, etc.), selected lead agencies and selected resident coordinators.

### C. World Food Summit

57. ACC, at its first regular session for 1997, decided on the mechanism for inter-agency follow-up to the World Food Summit. Under the arrangements agreed upon, the resident coordinator system would be encouraged to constitute at the country level thematic groups covering food security and related issues. At headquarters level, FAO and IFAD would jointly assume responsibility for running a network to backstop the country-level groups and to collect, analyse and disseminate selected country experiences, with reporting to ACC to be done, as appropriate, through CCPOQ and/or the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and results to be made available to other relevant mechanisms within or outside the ACC machinery.

### D. United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)

58. With regard to the follow-up to Habitat II, ACC, at its first regular session for 1997, decided that the arrangements should focus on supporting country-level action and coordination and should involve the development of guidelines to orient the resident coordinator system in establishing country-level thematic groups and strengthening implementation and monitoring at the national and local level.

## IV. PROGRESS AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

### A. Background

59. Since the establishment of the three ACC inter-agency task forces in October 1995, the Administrator of UNDP has been communicating with all resident representatives/resident coordinators concerning the integrated follow-up to the recent global conferences. He has urged them to use the overall framework of the ACC inter-agency task forces and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality as a broad guide in organizing country follow-up. It was suggested that they should take the lead, in close collaboration with agency representatives, in establishing thematic groups that would draw on, but not necessarily be identical to, the headquarters task forces and should reflect the particular country situation, priorities and needs. These groups are to involve fully national and local authorities and NGOs, as well as the concerned United Nations system partners.

60. Following the communication from the Administrator, resident coordinators have been organizing country-level follow-up action. Progress has been made in all regions where resident coordinators have organized or are in the process of establishing thematic groups involving, as appropriate, national and local authorities, NGOs, and concerned United Nations organizations. The following provides a brief summary of the emerging trends at the country level in the follow-up activities. This preliminary assessment was based on the information provided in the 1996 annual reports of resident coordinators on progress in 100 countries.

## B. Overview

61. In general, resident coordinators have initiated the establishment of thematic groups and inter-agency joint programmes, and projects are being launched that are closely related to the effective implementation of the outcomes of the recent global conferences. In all cases, their initiatives have been carried out in full consultation with the host Governments, taking into consideration the special domestic circumstances, national priorities and needs. Efforts have been made at the same time to promote wider participation of, as appropriate, national and local authorities, concerned United Nations organizations, and NGOs.

62. Notwithstanding the unique character of thematic groups or programmes in each country, a few similarities can be seen across regions, in the arrangements made for a thematic approach. The establishment of the thematic group on the issue of HIV/AIDS is one of them. In adopting the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, Governments committed themselves to provide all necessary means to reduce the spread and the rate of transmission of the HIV/AIDS infection. According to the 1996 annual reports, approximately 90 per cent of the resident coordinators have reported the establishment of the thematic groups/joint programmes on HIV/AIDS. The rate is particularly good in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

63. Another prevalent theme is poverty alleviation. One group of United Nations country teams has taken the approach of establishing a thematic group on poverty alleviation. Another set of country teams has decided to deal with the issue as a cross-cutting and underlying principle of most of the inter-agency collaboration and did not establish a specific working group or programme to address poverty. Approximately 60 per cent of the United Nations country teams took the second approach. In the Asia and the Pacific region, almost 80 per cent have taken the second approach. It is noteworthy that in Africa only approximately 60 per cent of the resident coordinators have established thematic groups or launched inter-agency activities in the area of poverty alleviation.

64. Advancement of women and mainstreaming of gender is another of the issues most frequently taken up (over 80 per cent of the countries in Africa and in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 60 to 70 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean). A large number of countries have also undertaken inter-agency coordination on issues related to basic social services, employment and sustainable livelihoods, and the environment.

65. In general, the 1996 annual reports indicate that the resident coordinators recognize the importance of the inter-agency coordination efforts at the country level, through such mechanisms as thematic groups and joint programmes/projects. Box 2 presents more detailed information on these activities. The richness of inter-agency experience has been fully utilized at the country level for operationalizing demand-driven partnership with Governments, civil society organizations and other development partners.

Box 2. Regional perspective

1. Africa

The most prevalent theme pursued in the countries in this region is the issue of gender mainstreaming/advancement and empowerment of women followed by poverty alleviation. Over 80 per cent of the countries now have inter-agency activities to promote this issue. Approximately 60 per cent of the countries have established thematic groups or launched inter-agency coordination activities in the area of poverty alleviation. The issues related to basic social services are also pursued actively in nearly 60 per cent of the countries. In a little over one third of the countries, various thematic groups and joint programmes/projects have been established in the areas of employment and sustainable livelihoods (including food security); environment; education; and children's human rights/child labour.

2. ESCWA region

The countries in this region have been very active in promoting inter-agency collaboration to promote the national implementation of major themes of global conferences. Over 80 per cent of the countries have established thematic working groups or launched inter-agency joint activities in the areas of poverty alleviation and the advancement and empowerment of women. The inter-agency collaboration in the area related to employment and sustainable livelihoods (including food security) has been prominent in nearly 70 per cent of the countries. Over 60 per cent of the countries have established thematic groups or inter-agency joint programmes/projects related to the issues of basic social services and environment. In approximately one third of the countries, the United Nations system has launched inter-agency initiatives in the area of education. The United Nations country teams in a few countries have initiated thematic groups or joint programmes/projects on children's human rights/child labour.

3. Asia and the Pacific

As mentioned above, 80 per cent of the countries in the region are dealing with the issue of poverty alleviation as a cross-cutting and underlying principle of most of the inter-agency collaboration and have not

established a separate working group or programme on the subject. However, countries in the region are very active in pursuing issues related to basic social services; employment and sustainable livelihoods (including the issue of food security); and women and gender. Especially for the theme of basic social services, over 70 per cent of the countries have launched inter-agency activities. Inter-agency collaboration has taken place mostly in the form of thematic groups (over 80 per cent) involving a larger number of concerned United Nations organizations, national and local authorities, and non-governmental organizations. Joint activities of the United Nations system have been carried out in about one third of the countries on issues related to environment, education, and children's human rights and child labour.

4. Latin America and the Caribbean

The issues related to basic social services, employment and sustainable livelihoods (including food security), and women and gender have been most frequently taken up (60-70 per cent countries in the region) as themes for inter-agency collaboration in this region. A little more than one third of the countries have initiated activities related to the issues of environment and education. The subject of children's human rights and child labour has been pursued by the United Nations system in a little less than one third of the countries.

5. Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

In this region, 80 per cent of the countries have cooperative activities for HIV/AIDS prevention. About 40 per cent of the countries have initiated activities in the areas of poverty alleviation and employment and sustainable livelihoods. About one third of the countries have launched inter-agency initiatives on basic social services and one fourth of them initiated activities on issues of women and gender. Resident coordinators have listed various obstacles that are hampering progress, such as absence of a government agency responsible for issues of concern, the aftermath of internal conflicts, and severe economic collapse after the disintegration of the former Soviet Union. The implementation of drastic structural adjustment programmes that have forced severe cuts in public expenditure in the social sectors was also pointed out as an important factor in this regard.

## C. Complementarity with other inter-agency initiatives

66. In many countries, efforts for increased use of thematic working groups and a more consultative approach to advance the implementation of the goals and the commitments of the recent global conferences have been proceeding in conjunction with already existing inter-agency collaboration mechanisms such as the country strategy note. The preparation of and the effort for the effective implementation of the country strategy note are reported to have helped in identifying the country's priority areas, to have led to closer inter-agency consultations to ensure the efficient application of United Nations resources in those priority areas, and thus in many cases to have served to strengthen the functioning of inter-agency thematic working groups.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

67. Promoting sustained and coordinated follow-up to the broad spectrum of United Nations conferences should remain a main objective of the system, in particular at the field level. In this regard, the Council may wish to take into consideration at its 1998 substantive session the results of the aforementioned comprehensive review of ACC, which is to be carried out at its second regular session for 1997, with a view to ensuring the promotion of the integrated and coordinated follow-up to the United Nations global conferences.

68. The Council may wish to encourage that, in reporting on the outcome of ACC comprehensive review of coordinated follow-up to conferences, a particular focus be placed on progress in ensuring coordination in follow-up to conferences in the area of statistics and indicators, taking into account the work done by the Statistical Commission.

69. Within the framework of the Council's 1995 agreed conclusions on a coordinated follow-up to international conferences, the Council could consider asking the Secretariat, in cooperation with organizations of the United Nations system and drawing upon the work of relevant inter-agency mechanisms, as well as the resident coordinator system, to report periodically on the progress achieved in promoting an integrated approach, under the coordination item of its general segment. The Council could continue to guide the work of its functional commissions in order to ensure better harmonization of their work.

70. The Council could consider recommending that its subsidiary bodies and other parts of the United Nations system use the Assembly's guidance when examining cross-cutting themes of conferences. The Council could invite its functional commissions, in monitoring goals and targets of international conferences, to make use of the work undertaken for the follow-up to the Children's Summit, building also on the work on indicators, goals and targets of the Task Force on Basic Social Services For All.

71. At the same time, the Council may wish to call on all relevant organizations of the United Nations system to further integrate the results of the major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields into their programmes of work and to contribute relevant information, analyses and assessments in support of the Council's own thematic reviews. The Council may also wish to call upon all the organizations of the United Nations system to continue to give priority attention to the provision of effective support, including by full utilization and implementation of outputs of the task forces, to the resident coordinators and the United Nations system country teams working with Governments, civil society organizations, and others in pursuit of the goals and objectives agreed at the United Nations conferences.

---